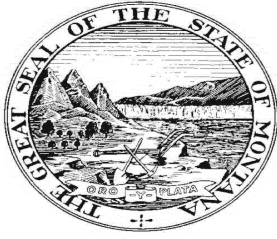


MONTANA VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION COUNCIL

REPORT TO THE GOVERNOR 2008



The Montana Vocational Rehabilitation Council advises and works with the program to improve policies, programs, delivery of services to consumers, and methods for reaching potential consumers and employers.



A MESSAGE FROM THE COUNCIL

The Montana Vocational Rehabilitation Council is proud to present its annual report to the Governor for 2008.

The Council's mission and task is advising and working with the Montana Vocational Rehabilitation Program (MVR). To that end, we actively promoted and supported the funding and operation of MVR through multiple activities across the state this past year. This report highlights many of those activities.

The financial gain afforded MVR consumers and the corresponding tax and other benefits to Montana are significant. The dignity, pride and sense of purpose gained through employment of individuals with disabilities are incalculable.

Through this report, we confirm the commitment of the Montana Vocational Rehabilitation Council members to work diligently on behalf of individuals with disabilities and to assist and advise the Montana Vocational Rehabilitation Program to empower all individuals with disabilities to achieve competitive employment and independence in their communities to the benefit of themselves and Montana.

The Family of Rehabilitation Programs

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES: This program provides services to assist, find or maintain employment for individuals who have a disability that creates significant difficulties in obtaining employment. Further information on this program appears in the "Stats at a Glance" portion of this report.

BLIND AND LOW VISION SERVICES: This program provides a broad range of services through three programs:

- (1) Vocational Services are similar to the vocational rehabilitation program described above, but serves individuals with a visual impairment, including persons with visual impairments who may have other disabilities. Data for this program is included in the "Stats at a Glance" portion of this report.
- (2) Visual Medical Services are for people who need medical treatment to prevent blindness, restore sight, or need other treatment where loss of vision cannot be prevented or sight restored. The program served 107 individuals in the last year.
- (3) The Older Blind Program provides services to older visually impaired or blind individuals so they can live more independently in their homes and communities. Services include low vision evaluations, purchase of adaptive aids, daily living skill instruction, orientation and mobility training, referral to other agencies, and other supplemental services. The program served 632 individuals in the last year.

MONTANA TELECOMMUNICATIONS ACCESS PROGRAM (MTAP): This program provides services that include the distribution of special telephone equipment to Montanans who have a variety of disabilities that makes it difficult to use a regular telephone. The program also operates the Montana Relay, a service that makes it possible to place phone calls between standard phones and text telephones. Many of the telephones MTAP distributes make use of text-based communication, for users who are unable to hear. The program served 978 individuals in the last year.

EXTENDED EMPLOYMENT: This program provides ongoing support for individuals with severe disabilities to assist them maintain employment. The Extended Employment program provides regular follow up at the employment site. The program served 307 individuals in the last year.

INDEPENDENT LIVING: This program provides services that promote consumer control; peer support; self-help; self-determination; equal access; and individual and systems advocacy in order to maximize the leadership, empowerment, independence, and productivity of individuals with disabilities. Full inclusion and integration of individuals with disabilities into the mainstream of American society is a primary goal of the program. The program served 948 individuals in the last year.

Native American Rehabilitation

Each year, this report highlights one of the state's six Native American Vocational Rehabilitation projects located in Montana. This year the Chippewa Cree Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation Project is featured. The project has provided culturally relevant VR services to Tribal members who reside on the Rocky Boy reservation with a VR grant funded under the Department of Education, Rehabilitation Services Administration.

This past year, the Chippewa Cree Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation Project provided services to over 120 consumers, which exceeded the goal set for this year. Twenty-four consumers have become successfully employed, 12 are in school preparing to reach their vocational goal, 17 are in placement with small businesses, and the others are working on their goals through Casey Life Skills.

The program currently works with 25-30 consumers per month in various capacities. This year, the program will focus on developing consumers' life skills. This is considered a priority area for assisting consumers to become self-sufficient.

The program emphasizes partnering with tribal and state programs serving consumers with disabilities. Current partnerships include:

- Tribal programs:
 - o Social Services
 - o Temporary Assistance to Needy Families Program (TANF)
 - o Stone Child College
 - o Rocky Boy Schools
 - o Senior Citizens
 - o White Sky Hope Center
 - o Rocky Boy Health Center
 - o Veterans Center.
- State programs:
 - o Independent Living
 - o MVR Council
 - o Blind and Low Vision Services
 - o Medicaid Infrastructure Grant
 - o Traumatic Brain Injury Association
 - o Veterans Administration
 - o Client Assistant Program.

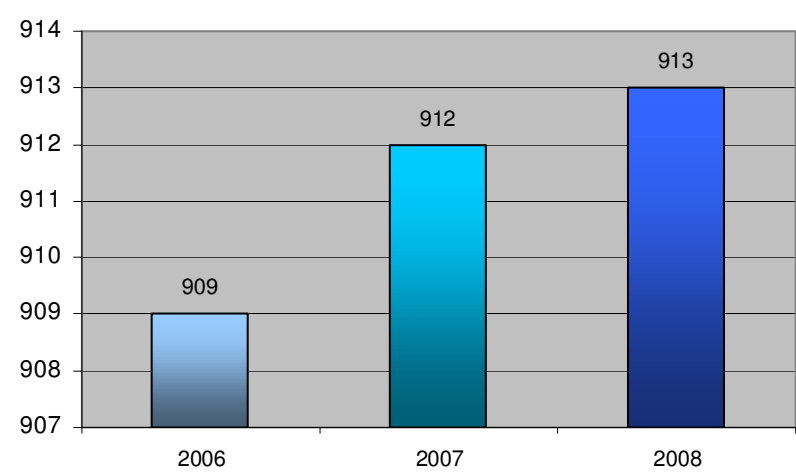
The program has two staff positions: counselor/coordinator and coordinator assistant/outreach. The program is housed in the Social Service Department of the Tribe.

MVR Council Members

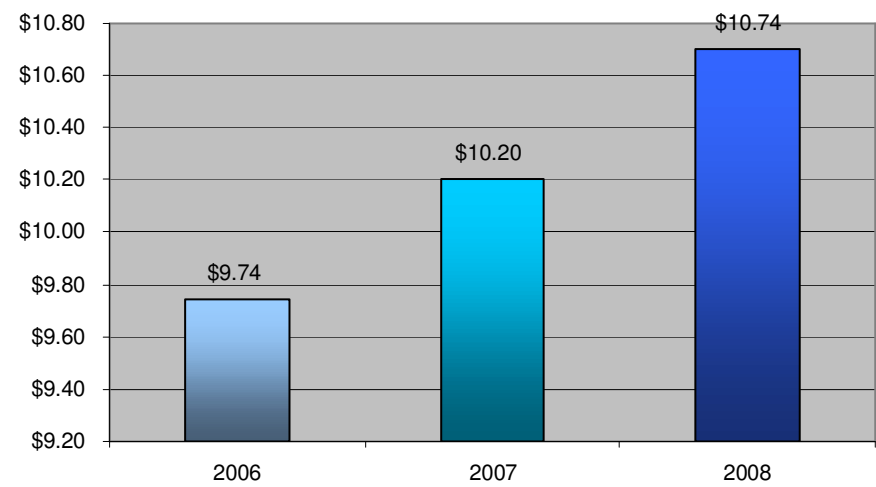
Denise Corrao - Miles City, Carol Lambert - Broadus, Ronald Mills - Miles City, Mavis Young Bear - Fort Belknap, Andrea Falcon - Kalispell, Christina Mattlin - Billings, Wayne Nankivel - Helena, Ruth Straley - Helena, Dick Trerise - Helena, Claudette Vance - Kalispell, Dan Burke - Missoula, Jacqueline Colombe - Basin, Faith Dawson - Missoula, Dalayna Faught - Missoula, Maureen Kenneally - Butte, Sharla LaFountain - Helena, Paul Pearson - Anaconda, Michelle Williamson - Pablo, Nina Cramer - Missoula, Mary Hall - Missoula, Lynn Winslow - Helena

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION STATS AT A GLANCE

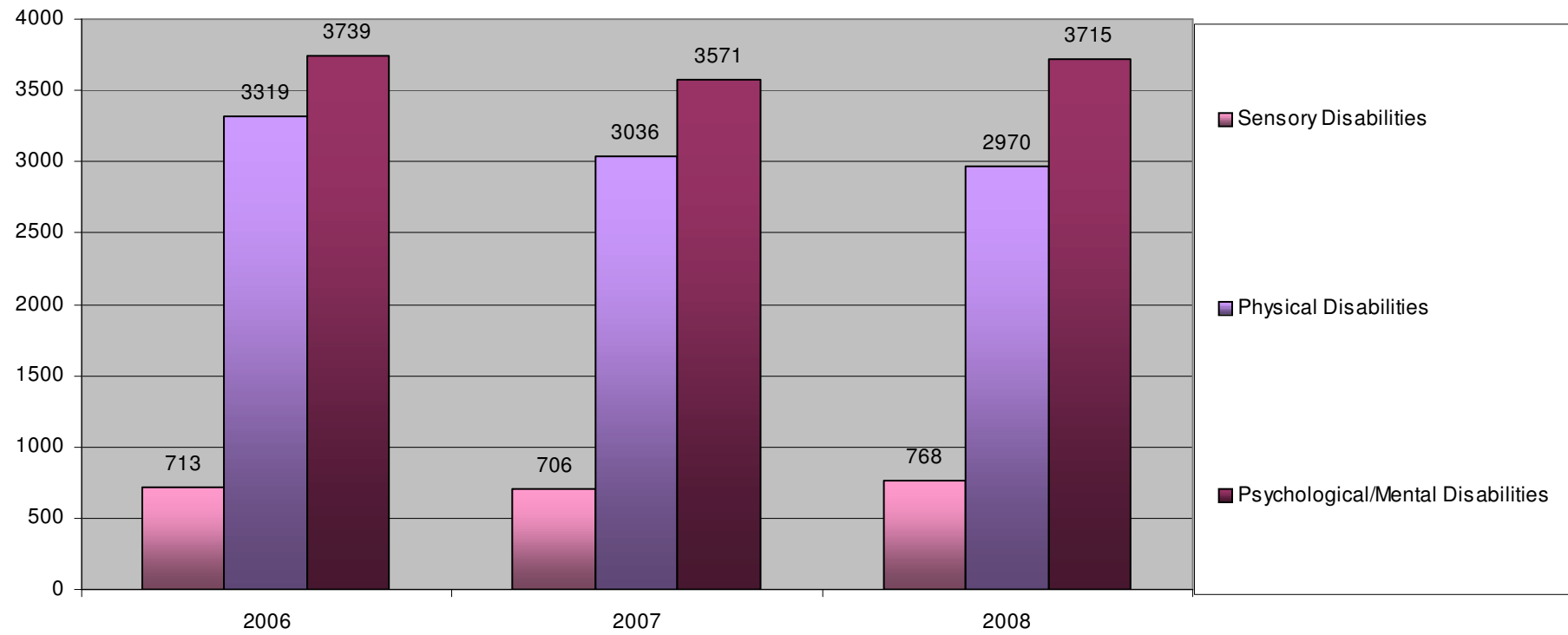
Number of MVR Placements by Year



Average Wage of MVR Placements by Year



Disability Type of Individuals Served by MVR by Year



SUCCESS STORIES

JOHN’S STORY

John applied with MVR in 2002. He had been a carpenter for most of his life, but injured his shoulder and could no longer do the heavy lifting. Through counseling, a vocational goal of working in the field of construction management was set. The goal allowed John to utilize his years of experience while not requiring the physical demands he could no longer meet. With the assistance of MVR, John successfully completed the requirements for a degree in construction engineering technology. Following training, John was employed and his wages were significantly higher than what he received at the time of his injury. He later wrote to his counselor: “I think this program is essential for those who were injured on the job and have nowhere to turn; I’m a perfect example of that. Thank you for changing my life!”

JANE’S STORY

This is an example of services provided by the Blind and Low Vision Service’s Older Blind Program. Jane applied for services to sign up for the Montana Talking Book Program and get suggestions on time management. The program was able to provide her with more than she expected. Her low vision created difficulties reading. The program introduced her to a closed circuit television system designed to help persons with low vision read. She was amazed at how the system helped her read. The system also helped her in writing. After learning to use this reading machine with a unit on loan from the program, she purchased her own machine. She also needed to monitor her blood pressure on a regular basis, but could not read the gauge on a standard blood pressure monitor. The program provided her with a blood pressure monitor with audible output to meet this need. As is so often the case, Jane had limited expectations of the services and was pleasantly surprised at what was available.

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COUNCIL ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- The Council provided input on MVR’s changes to address the needs of youth with disabilities transitioning from high school to the adult service system. This included supporting MVR in development of the new transition counseling position.
- The Council assisted with policy changes related to MVR supporting consumers seeking graduate degrees.
- The Council assisted with the development of MVR public service announcements to increase public awareness of MVR services.
- Jackie Colombe, vice chair, attended the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation conference in Washington DC. She met with the congressional delegation and provided information regarding last year’s MVR outcomes.
- The Council was actively involved in the Rehabilitation Services Administration’s monitoring site visit and provided input on MVR to assist the monitoring team. The Council is pleased and proud that the visit resulted in a positive report on MVR’s operation and function.
- In the recent federal monitoring visit MVR was recognized as having two national best practices: a project to develop future agency leaders and MVR’s strategic planning process. The Council has been involved with the development of each of these practices.

COUNCIL RECOMMENDATIONS

- Assess unserved/underserved populations, and develop a plan to serve them.
- Continue to collaborate with Section 121 projects in in order to enhance outcomes for consumers on Reservations.
- Strengthen networking between MVR and other agencies such as Mental Health, Job Services, and Department of Corrections.
- Continue to improve in-service training and qualifications for professional development of counselors.